



THE DAM BUILDER

There is a man who builds dams, an astounding old man whose job is to harness the flow. If it moves, I can stop it, he says. Then I can make it move for you.

First he brings his tools to a likely spot, a flaw where the flow is weakest, and he begins to plug it up, throwing in whatever's handy or cheap, so that the flow becomes sluggish. It wonders where to go and starts to back up on itself.

In the evening the old man surveys the progress of his dam. The flow has been made to sit and wait. It has tried to push the dam over with sheer force, but it can't get a foothold. It sees the old man watching it in the evening and the flow begins to hate.

Cackling, the old man keeps working. He builds floodgates to divert the flow when its anger rises. Then he hops up and down, slapping his knee with his hat. Gottcha sonof-a-bitch, he yells. The flow bubbles and broils with hate.

The old man comes to tell me he's finished. As he figures up my bill, wetting his pencil with his tongue, I admire my orderly flow, once so unruly and troublesome.

Don't turn your back on it, warns the old man, folding my check. It's a mean'un.

THE WAFFLE AND THE CANADIAN BACON

In the bathroom the Waffle combs its hair. The Canadian Bacon puts make-up on its gristle.

What's keeping those two, says the man.

Keep your pants on, says the woman, you don't want them before they're ready.

Maybe they need a little more heat, says the man. He turns up the thermostat until the house begins to sizzle.

The woman starts to sweat. You idiot, you've turned it up too high. The Waffle's hair will come uncurled, the Canadian Bacon's make-up will run.

What's going on out there? comes the shout from the bathroom.

A-hah! says the man.

Fool, you'll ruin it all, cries the woman.

But, ruined or not, I'll have it, cries the man.

The bathroom door is frantically unlocked. Behind a cloud of steam, here come the Waffle and Canadian Bacon running down the hall hand-in-hand.

Oh, now see what you've done, screams the woman as they fling themselves on the table.

Dig in, screams the man.

-- Joseph Nicholson

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